LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 009 503 540 1

THE WAIF

BY

ELIZABETH B. GRIMBALL

The Waif

A Christmas Morality of the Twentieth Century

by

ELIZABETH B. GRIMBALL

Production rights protected

THE WOMANS PRESS
600 LEXINGTON AVENUE
NEW YORK, N. Y.

[1923]

PN6120
C5G73

Copyright, 1923, by
National Board of the Young Womens Christian Association
of the United States of America

When this play is used, it is asked that acknowledgement be given to author and publisher.

Printed in the United States of America

©CLD 66327

DEC 15 1923

THE PEOPLE OF THE PLAY

in the order in which they appear

THE WAIF—dressed in a ragged cloak and cap, over his Christmas suit.

GREED—an old man, in rich cloak and cap of fur.

VANITY—a lovely young woman, gayly dressed, with handsome jewels.

SORROW—A woman, in sweeping gray draperies.

PLEASURE—a young man, in jester's suit, with cap and bells.

FAITH—a young girl in symbolic white.

SERVICE—a young woman in the uniform of the Red Cross nurse, or any other service profession, such as a physician.

MARY, THE MOTHER OF CHRIST.

THE THREE KINGS FROM THE EAST.

In presenting the play, it is well to stage it so that the Vision will form a tableau in the center when the inner curtain goes back. The first part of the play takes place before this curtain, the Vision being ready behind it. An effective staging can be arranged by having a dim street light against a brown curtain. The Waif comes out of the shadows on one side and the various passers-by come from one entrance or the other, always in front of the curtain. However, if there is no possibility of any but the simplest staging, the inner curtain is all that is necessary.

The Vision is a tableau of the adoration of the Magi. It may be posed according to any of the well known pictures. In the center is a star, illumined.

During the play a dance may be introduced for Pleasure, in character, also a song, any gay modern song, in dance time.

Vanity should also sing, if possible, a song of which beauty is the theme.

A chorus, not seen, should sing the hymn "It Came upon the Midnight Clear," just before the curtains part on the Vision.

If desired, tableaux may be shown for Pleasure and for Service. This is, however, not necessary, and if attempted should be well carried out, in a way not to destroy the atmosphere of the play.

The costumes may be easily arranged without much expense.

The Waif

A Christmas Morality of the Twentieth Century

by

ELIZABETH B. GRIMBALL

PLACE: The Street Corner of the World.

TIME: The Eve before Christmas.

A dimly lighted strip of stage represents a narrow street. At the back is a dark curtain. There must be enough light to show plainly the features of the Passers-by. The WAIF *creeps out of the shadows.*

THE WAIF (*Wistfully*):

I am the Christmas Spirit, once so fair,
But I have lost my way; my falt'ring feet
Are tired out, and oh, my hungry heart
Is empty now. The hurrying throngs
Do ever pass me by and know me not.
There is no peace on earth, and little love
Now warms the gloomy world in sorrow plunged.
I cannot see the Golden Star that leads us on,
Nor hear the Angels sing their song above.
I'm doomed to wander lost forever, till
I find a faithful heart to take me in
And greet me once again the King of Love,
The very heart of all the Christmas feast.

(*His voice breaks in a sob. He walks on, and in his grief stumbles against* GREED *who is hurrying on muttering to himself. He carries a purse in which one hears the jingle of coins.*)

THE WAIF (*Stopping him with hands extended*): Oh, stop, sir! Can you tell me where to find the Golden Star?

GREED: Gold, Gold! In shining heaps I pile my gold. Ah, I feast my eyes on it!

WAIF (*Joyfully*): Then you have seen it?

GREED (*Seeing him for the first time*): A beggar! No, no, it is not my way to help idlers. Work, work, my boy. That is the way to find gold.

WAIF: I do not want gold. It is the Golden Star I seek, and love—

GREED (*Interrupting*): Love, love? And what is that? Hate perhaps is here to-day—but love? It is so long since I have heard that word. There was a meaning, true, but I have forgotten. My greatest task is to get and gain and store and keep.

WAIF: To give and give to all the world. That was the message the angels brought so long ago.

GREED: I do not remember such a message. To save and save, that is my way. Let me pass on. There is no time to linger here. While I talk I lose much gold. I have no time to gaze at stars. Life is but short and I cannot stop to talk of foolish things.

WAIF: But, sir, love is not foolish. If you will only take my hand and look into my eyes, there will come back to you sweet memories of happy days when—

GREED (*Impatiently*): I do not remember such days. Off with you! I know your game. You'll get nothing from me by such methods—!

WAIF: Oh, you do not understand!

GREED: I do, indeed! On every hand I am beset by beggars, but I will keep my gold. (*He goes off into the shadows, muttering*)—Gold, gold, gold!

WAIF (*Looking after him*): Greed, greed, greed! That should be his song.

(*He turns sadly away but is stopped by a beautiful lady who enters. She is singing while she looks into a hand mirror. She does not see the* WAIF. *He draws into the corner and speaks to himself.*)

WAIF: Oh, surely, in her heart this pretty lady has a place for me! I will go to her so gently that she must stop and take my hand. (*He goes near and bows, looking at her admiringly.*) Stop, lady fair, and look at me just for one little moment.

VANITY (*Peering around her mirror*): Who spoke?

WAIF: Let me go with you.

VANITY (*Smiling*): I am on my way to a feast.

WAIF: Ah, take me, too! I can make you such a joyful feast.

VANITY (*Looking more closely*): A feast—you? Who are you?

WAIF: I was once the spirit of all joy—he who was called the Christmas Spirit!

VANITY: A boy! In rags, and begging, too!

WAIF: No, no, I do not beg. I have lost my way and cannot find the hearts who loved me long ago!

VANITY (*Distastefully*): No one loves a boy in tatters. The feast which I attend is the Feast of Beauty—beauty shining everywhere!

WAIF: Perhaps I shall find the Golden Star there. Oh, do you think it is there?

VANITY: I know not, child. My eyes outshine the stars. Oh, often have they told me so!

WAIF: Yes, your eyes are shining now.

VANITY: Long hours I sit before my mirror and watch my beauty grow. Do you not think me beautiful?

WAIF: Yes, yes, and in your heart, surely there must be a place for me. You look kind. Come with me. Perhaps your shining eyes so like the stars will see the Golden Star.

VANITY (*Pushing him away*): No, no, I must not stay. My beauty soon will wither like the flowers, and the throngs that follow now will pass me by.

WAIF: Lady, if you will only be kind, your beauty will never fade.

VANITY: My child, no one cares to see those whom age has touched with blight.

WAIF: Please, lady, please!

VANITY: You must not keep me. You are sad and lonely—and (*She shudders*) I cannot endure loneliness.

WAIF (*Crying*): But, lady—

VANITY (*Kindly*): There, there! (*Taking his face in her hand*) You are a pretty boy! Perhaps if you could find a better cloak—but no, I cannot wait—my beauty will not last if I tarry!

(*She hurries on while the* WAIF *says to himself*): If she would only look longer into my eyes, she'd find the spirit that no age can touch. Oh, the world is dark. Will no one lead me on my way?

(*As he speaks, a woman comes in slowly. She is* SORROW. *She moans and wrings her hands.*)

SORROW: Woe, woe, woe!

WAIF: Ah, she is so sad—I must comfort her.

SORROW: Woe, woe is me!

WAIF (*Going nearer*): Stay! I cannot bear to see you suffer so. I know that I can make you glad once more.

SORROW: What eager child is this that bars my way?

WAIF: 'Tis I, 'tis Hungry Heart. I can dry all your tears if you will only take me into your heart.

SORROW: I have no heart. Only grief is there.

WAIF: But grief and love go hand in hand.

SORROW: Such grief as this I bear is past all grief beside.

WAIF (*Pityingly*): Ah, let me help you!

SORROW: You cannot understand. No human hand or voice can bring relief.

WAIF: But if you believe in love, and trust me, I *can* all your grief allay.

SORROW: Ah, child, I am the broken heart of all the earth, the woman-heart once filled with tender mirth to see my sons go forth to play the game of life. But now, alas, they slay and kill in murderous strife. There is no joy in this dark world.

WAIF: Take my hand. I am the spirit of the Feast of Friends, where Love reigns King.

SORROW: Oh, no, not Love but Death is King to-day.

WAIF: Yet there is comfort.

SORROW: No, there is no comfort now for me. There can never be. (*Going*) Woe, woe, woe!

(*She pulls away from the* WAIF *and goes into the shadows, moaning. The* WAIF *runs a few steps after her and collides with a young man who comes in singing a rollicking song. He dances a few steps.*)

WAIF: O pardon me, sir, I did not see you. The lady who has just gone made me weep, her sorrow was so great. My tears blinded me.

PLEASURE (*Good-humoredly*): Well, well, that is too bad. No harm done. But, (*Putting his hand on the* WAIF'S *shoulder*) out of my way! The feast awaits and I am the King—

WAIF (*Interrupting*): The feast? Why, I was once King of a Feast.

PLEASURE (*Laughing*): The feast of rags and tatters most like,—but come along and see a real feast. No sad tales, though. My guests do not like solemn faces. All must be gay and bright.

WAIF: Oh, I should like to go.

PLEASURE: But you must change your clothes.

WAIF: I have no more. I lost them all when I lost my way.

PLEASURE: Oh, so you have lost your way and your clothes, careless boy! And now what else have you lost?

WAIF: Oh, sir, I seek a Golden Star. Have you seen it?

PLEASURE: A star? Ho, ho! Why, of course there are stars if one has time to gaze at them but give me the lights within my palace halls—(*Rubbing his hands and dancing a few steps*) Ah, how they shine! And how I love them!

WAIF: Oh, love me, too! Love for each other is greater than love for bright lights, and love—

PLEASURE: Love! Ha, ha! Why, who are you that you do not know there is no such thing to-day? Pleasure is the King of the world, and I am Pleasure! All wait to welcome me.

WAIF: And I am Hungry Heart. I seek a heart to take me in. O take me in *your* heart.

PLEASURE: I cannot tarry, boy. My friends await.

WAIF: And am I not your friend? I was of yore the Christmas Spirit bright. I know I would be the King of your great feast if you would let me in—

PLEASURE (*Laughing*): There is no room for beggars in my palace. My guests would laugh at you. They are so rich and fair. (*The* WAIF *weeps.*) But do not cry. Wait outside the gates; if I do not forget I'll send you some crumbs from the feast.

(*He goes, singing his song.*)

WAIF: Alas, can no one help me find a heart to love me, and is there none left in the world who remembers me or the Holy Star?

(*He shrinks into the shadow and weeps.* FAITH *enters. She is sad and walks with drooping head and stumbling feet.*)

FAITH: Oh, I am weary, weary. The way grows dark and steep. There is no friendly face. The world is filled with noise and terror. None listens to my songs. (*She looks about.*) But it seems quiet here. Perhaps if I call loudly some kind soul will heed me. (*She holds out her hands pleadingly.*) Is there not some one in this cruel world who will hear my story?

WAIF (*Comes forward eagerly*): Poor child, and are you lost, too?

FAITH (*Peering at him*): I do not know. It is so dark, and I am weary.

WAIF: Ah, I am weary, too. I seek someone to lead me on my way. What is your name?

FAITH: Faith is the name I bore, just simple Faith, but now they call me Faith the Wanderer. You seem so kind, perhaps you will help me. I feel that I can speak to you.

WAIF: I feel that you have a tender heart, but I, too, have lost my way.

FAITH (*Mournfully*): And I hoped you would help me find the Star.

WAIF: The Star? Why, I, too, seek a Star—but all tell me there is no Star and none will tarry long to hear my story.

FAITH: But I believe. I know the Holy Star still shines above the birthplace of God's great Love.

WAIF: O little maid, do you not think that if we fare hand in hand along the way, we can make the world believe again?

FAITH: They will not listen. The sound of marching death drowns out my voice. The cries of broken hearts rise far above your plea.

WAIF: But yet must we try, for unless there is a heart still left with room for me, the Christmas Spirit, I shall perish from the earth. Come, we will seek together.

(*As they go along a few steps they see a figure coming, a woman who walks as with a strong purpose although her face is serious. The children go near.*)

WAIF: See, who is this? She looks so strong. Perhaps she can help us. Speak to her, Faith.

FAITH (*Timidly*): Oh, stop a moment—we are lost—

SERVICE: Lost. (*Looking at them*) Poor waifs! Who are you? Where are you going?

WAIF: We are the Spirits who once brought comfort and good cheer to all the suffering world, but we are forgotten. Can you wait?

SERVICE: Ah, yes—I can always wait if I can serve. But there is so much to do. Listen, do you not hear? . . . .

FAITH (*Shrinking*): O no, I cannot listen for there is the cry of pain—

SERVICE: Yes, there is pain and I must hasten for they need the ministering of Service.

WAIF: Let me go, too. They must need my love.

FAITH: And my peace.

SERVICE (*Looking closely at them*): Who are you? Love and Peace, you say. No, no; Courage, Strength, and Sorrow, but not love. Listen! How they suffer. I must go on.

WAIF: But such suffering is born of much love—I know.

FAITH: Ah, take us! take us, too! I feel that Service will lead us to the Star.

WAIF: The Holy Star.

SERVICE: The Christmas Star! But there is no peace to make a Christmas Feast. We must serve.

FAITH: *He* served—Who died so long ago. Oh, come back with us to find the Star to-day!

WAIF: The Star of Love, O Service; love for the world and love for God.

SERVICE (*Holding out her arms*): O little waifs—I love you. Let me go with you. Let us find the Star and bring the message of Christ's love to the world again.

(*The three go along into the shadows, leaving the stage empty. Softly, as at a distance, one hears a song of Christmas. Slowly the inner curtains part to show the Vision. The three wanderers come back.*)

FAITH: The Star!

WAIF: The Christmas Star!

SERVICE: The Gift of Love!

(*They kneel and the curtains slowly cover the Vision.*)

Above the tableau there must be a Star, illuminated if possible.

When the curtains are closed the WAIF *steps forth. He is all in red and white, the Christmas colors. He carries an armful of gifts which he gives to* SERVICE. *Then he comes forward.*

The Waif:

Come, gentles all, rejoice with me to-night!
I that was lost, and wandered lonely here
With none to love and none to take my hand
And lead me to the feast, where once of yore
I was the Prince of all the joy and cheer—
By Faith have come into my own again,
And Service unto God and man I give.
Oh, join with me, and kneel once more, my friends,
At Mary's feet and offer to the Holy Babe
Your gifts of Love and Faith and Worship here.
Then, then, your hearts will overflow with grace,
For into each I've crept to make you glad
That Faith and Service found the Golden Star
And led the Christmas Spirit back into the hearts of men!

THE WOMANS PRESS
600 LEXINGTON AVENUE
NEW YORK, N. Y.